



## **NEWS**

### **Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas L.A. County Board of Supervisors, 2<sup>nd</sup> District**

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#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **RIDLEY-THOMAS HELPS LAUNCH UNPRECEDENTED EFFORT TO HELP L.A. COUNTY RESIDENTS STOP SMOKING**

*Free nicotine patches and gum available at Ralphs' Pharmacies while supplies last*

**LOS ANGELES** - Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas today joined County health officials and the Ralphs Grocery Company to launch a smoking-cessation campaign that will involve the largest free distribution of nicotine patches and nicotine gum ever in California.

The 30,000 two-week starter kits, funded from the County's allotment from a settlement of a lawsuit against the tobacco industry and contributions from the L.A. Care Health Plan, will be distributed at 47 participating Ralphs' pharmacies while supplies last.

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable deaths in the United States and costs the nation about \$4.3 billion due to related diseases and death each year.

"The prevalence of this particular problem is highest in the African-American and Asian/Pacific Islanders," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas, who joined Dr. Jonathan Fielding, the County's health officer at a Ralphs store near Staples Arena to launch the campaign.

The Supervisor said "remarkable strides" have been made in reducing smoking in the county through the efforts of public cessation programs.

"But we also know that there is still a whole lot more work to be done that will require more innovation," he said, lauding the public-private collaboration of the new campaign.

County residents 18 years of age or older are eligible to receive the anti-smoking kits. Participants will be screened for eligibility to ensure that the nicotine replacement therapy will not conflict with any pre-existing conditions. They will also be required to participate in a follow-up survey."

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